SHRI PRIYARANJAN DASMUNSI: Sir, if my words are expunged, bulk of his comments should also be expunged. In my political life, I never compromised a philosophy that Congress Party surrendered to United States. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA: You did ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI PRIYARANJAN DASMUNSI: I have never. It is your party ...*(Interruptions)*...

श्री सभापति: ठीक है, मैं प्रोसीडिंग्ज देख लूंगा। ...(व्यवधान)...

श्री सत्यव्रत चतुर्वेदी (उत्तराखंड): आप लोगों ने * और आपको घुटनों का ऑपरेशन कराना पड़ गया। ...(व्यवधान)...

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA: You have always surrendered national interests from 1947 till date. Even now you are surrendering. ...*(Interruptions)*...

श्री सभापति: शांत रहिए...शांत रहिए ...(व्यवधान)...आप बैठ जाइए। Now Questions.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Criteria for laying new rail lines and gauge conversion

*421. SHRI O.T. LEPCHA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the details of criteria fixed by Government for taking up new railway lines and gauge conversion works in the country;

(b) whether there are railway lines yet to be converted in broad gauge lines in NER; and

(c) the details of steps proposed to be taken by Government to remove the regional imbalance in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) to (c) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

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* Expunged as ordered by the Chair.

Statement

(a) The criteria fixed by Government for taking up new lines and gauge conversion is as under:

New lines: The policy for taking up new line projects was enunciated by the National Transport Policy Committee in 1980. This policy states that new lines would be taken up on the following criteria:

(i) Project-oriented lines to serve new industries for tapping mineral and other resources.

(ii) Missing links for completing alternative routes to relieve congestion on existing saturated routes.

(iii) Lines required for strategic reasons; and

(iv) Lines for establishment of new growth centres or giving access to remote areas.

Gauge Conversion: Project uni-gauge was taken up on 01.04.1992 and the policy adopted for taking up gauge conversion to carry out the conversion of lines at least cost yet providing a standard of service not lower than what the rail users were getting on the Metre Gauge covering the following areas:

(a) To take up conversion of lines to develop alternative broad gauge (BG) routes obviating the need for doubling existing BG lines on these routes.

(b) To establish new BG links between stations connected by other BG lines.

(c) To establish BG connection to ports, industrial centers and locations having potential for growth.

(d) To take up conversion of lines required on strategic considerations.

(e) To minimize transhipment and to improve wagon turn around by avoiding delays at transhipment points.

Many new lines and gauge conversion projects have been taken up on socio-economic considerations for development of backward, hilly, remote and under developed areas.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) The gauge conversion of metre/narrow gauge lines is progressively being done throughout the country keeping in view the availability of resources. The pace of conversion has been expedited and majority of Metre Gauge (MG) lines are proposed to be converted in XI Plan period.

SHRI O.T. LEPCHA: Will the Minister be pleased to state how many States are there in our country that have not been connected with rail-link till date?

SHRI R. VELU: Sir, all the States have been connected except some of the States in the North-Eastern Region. They were not connected earlier. Now we are trying to connect them. We have taken steps to connect all the eight States.

श्री ओ॰टी॰ लेपचा: माननीय सभापति महोदय, मैंने माननीय मंत्री जी से यह पूछा था कि इस देश के किस-किस राज्य को अभी तक रेलवे से नहीं जोड़ा गया है। मुझे इसका सही उत्तर तथा डिटेल में जानकारी नहीं मिली है। मैं मंत्री जी से दूसरा सप्लीमेंटरी पूछता हूं कि आज देश आजादी का छठा दशक मना रहा है। सिक्किम देश का एक ऐसा राज्य है, जहां पर एक ही लाइफ लाइन 31 नेशनल हाईवे है और अभी तक इसको रेलवे से नहीं जोड़ा गया है। मैं माननीय मंत्री जी से यह जानना चाहता हूं कि क्या सिक्किम राज्य को रेलवे से जोड़ने का काम करेंगे, यदि करेंगे तो कब तक करेंगे।

SHRI R. VELU: Sir, first of all, let me clarify that in the answer I said that all the States had been connected except a few North-Eastern States. One of them is Sikkim. In 2000, we conducted a survey in Sikkim which would give you about-35 percentage of rate of return. So, that was given up. Again, in 2004-05, one more survey was conducted. It also proved to be negative. Now, the Chief Minister of Sikkim has written to us to conduct one more survey. Accordingly, we have conducted a survey of Sikkim to Rangpo. It is about 5 km inside Sikkim. Once the report comes to us, we will get this examined.

श्री ओ॰टी॰ लेपचा: माननीय सभापति महोदय, मंत्री जी रेंगपो तक के सर्वे की बात करीब दो-तीन साल पहले से कहते आ रहे हैं। इस पर प्रश्न करना और इसका उत्तर देना, आज तक यह सब होता आ रहा है, लेकिन महोदय, आज मैं आपके माध्यम से मंत्री से यह जानना चाहता हूं कि रेल से जोड़ने की बात तो उधर ही छोड़ दें, मैंने रिजर्वेशन के बारे में भी पूछा था। मैंने इस बारे में दो मंत्रियों को लिखकर भी दिया था कि सिक्किम में रेल नहीं है, वहां से यहां जितनी जनता यात्रा

करती है, उनके लिए कोई रिजर्वेशन कोटा नहीं है। मैंने कोटा बढ़ाने के लिए एक पत्र पहले लिखकर दिया था। मैं यह जानना चाहता हूं कि क्या वजह है कि अब तक कोटा नहीं मिला है और रेल भी नहीं मिल रही है। कृपया माननीय मंत्री जी इस बारे में स्पष्ट जानकारी दें।

श्री सभापति: माननीय मंत्री महोदय, आप कोटा तय कर दें।

SHRI R. VELU: Sir, we will consider it favourably.

श्री सभापति: आप यह कब तक कंसिडर करेंगे?

SHRI R. VELU: Sir, we will definitely consider that. We will issue it in a month's time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Next question, 422.

SHRI RAM JETHMALANI: Sir, please allow us to ask.

श्री सभापति: किसके लिए?

SHRI RAM JETHMALANI: On Question No. 421.

श्री सभापति: क्या आप उस पर बोलना चाहते हैं? बोलिए, बोलिए।

SHRI RAM JETHMALANI: Sir, I have been making violent gestures.

श्री सभापति: बोलिए, बोलिए। ठीक, इनसे रेल चलवाइए।

SHRI RAM JETHMALANI: Sir, I am sorry to say that the importance of this question has not been appreciated, because the answer is that 'we conducted a survey in 2000, then we conducted another survey and the return was-35 per cent, so we abandoned it.' Sir, it has to be realised that the problem of Sikkim has to be seen from two angles. First of all, it is a landlocked State and it is a border State with sensitive borders and not very convenient neighbours. Therefore, Sir, the strategic needs of this place require that there must be a railway line which ends up in Sikkim and there must be an airport. This is one State where there is neither a railway line entering the State nor is there an airport. Sir, even the helicopters cannot function because most of the time the climate is rainy. And, Sir, when there is rain, helicopters don't function. It has a great strategic importance and all other considerations must be given up. And this State must immediately receive attention. Secondly, Sir, Sikkim is one of the most scenic spots in our country. It has such tremendous tourist potential.

Sir, it has mountains, it has rivers, it has rivulets, it has waterfalls and there is mighty Kanchenjunga showing all over.....

MR. CHAIRMAN: It has no advocate like you!

SHRI RAM JETHMALANI: Sir, it could be converted into a revenue earning State, an income earning State, of India ....(*Interruptions*).... And I am sorry, you merely say, "We conducted a survey. The return was .35!" ....(*Interruptions*).... The return can be increased. Sir, I want to have an assurance from the hon. Minister that these considerations will be borne in mind and that this problem will be looked at from a fresh angle speedily, and with great attention and great concern.

श्री सभापति: ठीक है।

SHRI R. VELU: Sir, I share the concern of the hon. Member. In fact, in our effort to connect the Capitals of all these hilly States, we have already initiated action, and more than once I have mentioned in the House that we are trying our best to connect all the Capitals. Now, Sikkim has got an entirely different topography, and our hon. Member knows about it. Once the survey report comes, we will definitely take into consideration the requirement of that State also in the matter of connecting the rails ....(*Interruptions*)....

SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: What is the time-frame? ....(*Interruptions*)....

SHRI DWIJENDRA NATH SHARMAH: Sir, the hon. Minister has no information as to how many States have not yet been connected by the railways. ....(*Interruptions*).... He could not give a reply. He says 'perhaps'. ....(*Interruptions*).... Sir, if I am not incorrect, China has constructed a railway line in the Sikkim border up to 16000 ft. high. And today, this hon. Minister is saying, "We are surveying the Sikkim railway line!" This is very disgraceful, Sir. May I know whether the Ministry has undertaken any specific programme or a specific scheme or a time-bound programme to connect interior places of Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram?

SHRI R. VELU: Sir, again, I want to repeat, I never said that I am not aware of what are the States not connected. ....(*Interruptions*)....

SHRI DWIJENDRA NATH SHARMAH: No; you said 'perhaps'.

SHRI R. VELU: For your kind information, you have not heard it. ....(*Interruptions*).... In the din of noise you did not hear it, please. That is on record. ....(*Interruptions*).... I have said that all the States have been covered except some of the North-Eastern States. One of them is Sikkim. I have also said that twice they have given up. Third time, they have taken up seriously about the survey. I have also promised that once the survey report comes, I definitely assure you that Sikkim will find a place. ....(*Interruptions*).... I will explain to you. ....(*Interruptions*).... Let me explain. ....(*Interruptions*)....

SHRI DWIJENDRA NATH SHARMAH: Till now, you are not sensitive. Not a single Railway Minister has been sensitive towards Sikkim till today, if I am not incorrect. ....(*Interruptions*)....

SHRI R. VELU: Sir, that is not relevant. ....(*Interruptions*)....

MR. CHAIRMAN: You kindly take. ....(*Interruptions*).... You kindly take into Sikkim. ....(*Interruptions*).... You kindly take into Sikkim. ....(*Interruptions*)....

SHRI R. VELU: Sir, I will take into Sikkim. ....(*Interruptions*)....

श्री मोती लाल बोरा: माननीय सभापति महोदय, यह प्रश्न बहुत ही महत्वपूर्ण प्रश्न है। इसमें नई रेल लाइनों को बिछाने और आमान परिवर्तन के बारे में रायपुर और धनतेरी के बीच में कई वर्षों से नेरो गेज लाइन चल रही है। माननीय मंत्री महोदय ने हमेशा इस बात का आश्वासन दिया था कि इस नेरो गेज लाइन को ब्राड गेज में परिवर्तित करेंगे। माननीय सभापति जी, मैंने यह भी कई बार कहा कि गाड़ी इतनी धीरे चलती है कि आदमी उतर जाता है और अगर उसे बाहर से कोई अपनी ...(**व्यवधान**)...

श्री सभापति: बाथरूम नहीं होगा गाड़ी में।

श्री मोती लाल बोरा: जी हां, गाड़ी घोड़ा गाड़ी से भी कमजोर है। मैं माननीय मंत्री जी से यह स्पष्ट आश्वासन चाहता हूं कि क्या वे निकट भविष्य में इस नेरो गेज लाइन को ब्राड गेज लाइन में बदलने की कृपा करेंगे?

SHRI R. VELU: Sir, this is a narrow gauge line where we have got about 2000 kms. in the country. We are examining seriously which are the narrow gauge lines to be converted or which are lift as some of the heritage lines. In this specific question, the hon. Member has asked about the rail route Dhamtari. It is a narrow gauge line of course. But

we definitely take it into consideration. We will consider whether this can be extended in terms of conversion as per the policy which has already been adopted. I will get back to him and furnish him the details. ....*(Interruptions)*....

SHRI NABAM REBIA: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I just come from the North-East. The North-East is considered economically unviable by the Ministry. Recently we, the MPs from the North-East, particularly, from Arunachal Pradesh, had a meeting with the hon. Minister of State for Railways. We are very much satisfied with the steps taken by the Ministry. The S.P. Shukla Commission had made certain recommendations as to how the Railways could be improved and the steps to be taken by the Railway Ministry to link most of the hilly States of the North-Eastern Region. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the Ministry has gone into the recommendations of the S.P. Shukla Commission pertaining to his Ministry, while formulating the policies and programmes for the Noth-East.

SHRI R. VELU: Sir, it is a specific question about Arunachal Pradesh. In fact, on the basis of the assurance given on the floor of the House, I had convened a meeting of all the MPs from the North-Eastern Region and had a detailed discussion about each State. Arunachal Pradesh is one of them where we have already sanctioned a scheme. But the alignment was changed twice. Finally, we have settled on one alignment and that is Harmoti-Itanagar. Regarding recommendations of the Commission, right now I am not posted with the information. I will get back to the Member with the details. However, the North-Eastern Region is given top priority and we have sanctioned in the last three years Rs. 1,176 crores and after the UPA Government has come to power, it has declared seven out of the fourteen projects as national projects and the money comes from the Finance Ministry. We are not depending on our own resources. It would mean that we have given the utmost importance to the North-Eastern Region because it is strategically located, as the hon. Member has said. It is a border area. We should not ignore that area and we are very considerate in taking all the proposals into consideration. We are very serious about whatever the Members say.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question No. 422. *(Interruptions)*... Next Question. Question No. 422. *(Interruptions)*...

SHRIMATI BRINDA KARAT: Sir, give a chance to the Member from Tripura *(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question No. 422. *(Interruptions)*... That matter is over. *(Interruptions)*... That matter is now *(Interruptions)*... Question No. 422.

New Trains for Kerala

*422. SHRI K.E. ISMAIL: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether his Ministry is aware of the acute difficulties faced by passengers from Kerala to various destinations and back because of the absence of sufficient train services; and

(b) if so, whether his Ministry would take urgent steps to start new train services from Thiruvananthapuram to Bangalore, New Delhi, Mumbai and other destinations and back to mitigate the hardships of the passengers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) and (b) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) Sufficient train services to various destinations are available from Kerala. To meet extra rush during summer, winter and periods of peak demand, special trains are also run and extra coaches are attached to the existing trains to the extent feasible and justified.

(b) Following additional train services including extension and increasing frequency have been announced in the Budget 2007-2008:—

(1) Thiruvananthapuram-Mumbai Garib Rath Express (bi-weekly).

(2) Increase infrequency of 6315/6316 Thiruvananthapuram-Bangalore City Express from weekly to tri-weekly.

(3) Increase in freqency of 6527/6528 Kannur-Yesvantpur Express from weekly to tri-weekly.

(4) Increase in frequency of 6603./6604 Mangalore-Thiruvananthapuram Maveli Express from tri-weekly to daily.